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Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 33 of General Assembly resolution 69/226, provides a description of the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) since the issuance of the previous report (A/69/298) in implementing the outcome of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and in strengthening UN-Habitat, including an update on progress made in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

The report contains a summary of the outcomes of the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat that relate to policy. In particular, it highlights the content of one decision and seven resolutions of the Governing Council, including those on reform of the governance of UN-Habitat and the work programme and budget of UN-Habitat for the biennium 2014-2015. It also provides a description of some significant programme activities undertaken during the reporting period.

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The report also provides a description of the progress made in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), including the work of the Preparatory Committee at its first and second sessions; regional and national preparatory activities; mobilization of local governments, other Habitat Agenda partners and the United Nations system; financial and human resources; and information and publicity.

Finally, the report presents a number of conclusions and recommendations relating to policy matters and to Habitat III.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 33 of General Assembly resolution 69/226 on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), including an update on progress made in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

II. Action taken by the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its twenty-fifth session

2. The twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat was held in Nairobi from 17 to 23 April 2015, on the special theme "The contribution of UN-Habitat to the post-2015 development agenda: promoting sustainable urban development and human settlements", under which were two sub-themes: "Enhancing urban-rural linkages across the continuum of human settlements to harness the transformative power of urbanization for sustainable development" and "The role of UN-Habitat in the post-2015 development agenda". The Council took one substantive decision and adopted seven resolutions. They are summarized below, with the exception of resolution 25/7, which is summarized in section III.

Decision 25/1: Amendment to rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the Governing Council

3. Decision 25/1 was based on the report of the working group established at the beginning of the twenty-fifth session to consider the amendment to rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the Governing Council. By this decision, the Governing Council amended rule 19, in order to make the replacement of presidents of the Governing Council and members of the Bureau clearer, easier and faster.

Resolution 25/1: Contribution of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements

4. In its resolution 25/1, which was based on the outcome of the dialogue on the special theme for its twenty-fifth session, the Governing Council encouraged member States to, among other things, consider the important role that sustainable urbanization and human settlements can play as a key driver of sustainable development in their national and subnational development plans; promote the reduction of disparities along the urban-rural continuum; and initiate or enhance programmes and projects at the national or subnational level to strengthen the capacity of rural service centres and small and intermediate towns.

5. The Governing Council also requested the Executive Director, among other actions, to continue to support member States in the development and implementation of their urban policies to manage the continuum of human settlements; promote political commitment to sustainable development, while encouraging planned, productive and integrated city growth; promote the role of sustainable urbanization and human settlements as a transformative force for

achieving and advancing sustainable development in support of the post-2015 development agenda; and work closely with other intergovernmental organizations and stakeholders to strengthen urban-rural linkages.

Resolution 25/2: Strengthening national ownership and operational capacity

6. In its resolution 25/2, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to work closely with member States and the United Nations Development Group to fully implement the most recent resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review; enhance the country programme document mechanism, with a view to strengthening national ownership of the country-level activities of UN-Habitat; support national Governments to encourage local authorities and other stakeholders to improve the effective implementation of country programmes; incorporate the work of UN-Habitat into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework model and engage actively with the "One United Nations" initiative; and continue collaboration with regional intergovernmental mechanisms in order to facilitate policy change and programming and regional and national prioritization of sustainable urbanization and human settlements.

Resolution 25/3: Strategic plan for 2014-2019 and the work programme and budget of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for the biennium 2016-2017

7. By its resolution 25/3, the Council approved the proposed work programme and budget for 2016-2017. The Council further noted the efforts of the Executive Director to mobilize resources for the programme and requested him, among other actions, to enhance his efforts to broaden the donor base of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation general purpose budget; strengthen the implementation of results-based management; and allocate adequate resources accordingly.

8. The Council also called upon all member States and stakeholders to provide financial support to UN-Habitat through increased voluntary contributions and encouraged more member States and stakeholders to accord priority to contributions to the general purpose fund of the Foundation, in order to provide predictable multi-year funding.

Resolution 25/4: Implementation of the strategic plan for 2014-2019

9. In its resolution 25/4, the Council requested the Executive Director to ensure the development of programmes and projects that implement an integrated approach to sustainable urbanization and human settlements and promote effective urban-rural linkages, and to continue the work of UN-Habitat for the enhancement of urban safety.

10. In part I of the resolution, the Council addressed the substantive focus and scope of the work of UN-Habitat and requested the Executive Director to take the following actions, among many others: increase efforts to take on board the perspectives of local authorities and have those perspectives incorporated into the implementation of the outcomes of the post-2015 development agenda and Habitat III; consider health and well-being in developing policies on urban and territorial planning and in the operational work of UN-Habitat; collaborate with member States and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to examine the

consequences of HIV on urban life and prosperity; address urban challenges relating to displaced populations in a vulnerable situation; support initiatives aimed at improving access to sustainable energy and mainstreaming energy efficiency and sustainable energy systems into housing policies and regulations; and support member States, and local governments in particular, in considering the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

11. The Council also encouraged member States to consider the development of an effective policy framework around sustainable urbanization and human settlements; support the promotion of local economic development activities in order to enhance access to financing for sustainable urbanization; consider the implementation of the Global Housing Strategy to the Year 2025; and support the Urban Basic Services Trust Fund and the Global Expanded Water Monitoring Initiative.

12. In part II of the resolution, which addressed cross-sectoral issues, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to continue to pursue the mainstreaming of youth and gender equality perspectives in the normative work and operational programmes of UN-Habitat and ensure that those cross-cutting issues remained an important part of the preparatory process for Habitat III; ensure that adequate human and financial resources were allocated for continued youth and gender mainstreaming; build upon lessons learned from the operational work of UN-Habitat in helping cities to reduce their environmental impact and emissions, addressing their impact on human health and climate change; and mainstream human rights in the context of advancing the goals and mandate of UN-Habitat.

13. In part III of the resolution, the Council focused on advocacy and partnerships. It requested the Executive Director to work on the engagement of new partners through, among other mechanisms, the World Urban Campaign; promote regional dialogue on sustainable urbanization and human settlements issues in all regions; and strengthen and coordinate the partnerships of UN-Habitat with humanitarian and development actors, to help increase the resilience and preparedness of cities.

Resolution 25/5: Support by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and the role of national Habitat committees in its preparation and implementation

14. By its resolution 25/5, the Council encouraged member States to take into account, in preparing for Habitat III and the implementation of its outcomes, the role of sustainable urbanization as a driver of sustainable development, urban-rural linkages and the interlinkages between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; establish and support broad-based national Habitat committees and facilitate the coordination of Habitat Agenda partners and major groups and other stakeholders to follow up on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and to fulfil other roles as may be recommended by the Habitat III conference; and expedite and finalize their national reports for Habitat III.

15. The Council also requested the Executive Director to provide technical assistance to support the development of adequate capacity for national Habitat committees; offer the expertise of UN-Habitat in the elaboration of the Habitat III global report, the technical inputs to the New Urban Agenda and the preparatory process as a whole; and promote improved participation of and contributions by

major groups and other stakeholders at all stages of the Habitat III process and in the implementation of its outcome document.

Resolution 25/6: International guidelines on urban and territorial planning

16. By its resolution 25/6, the Governing Council approved the international guidelines on urban and territorial planning. The Council also encouraged member States to consider the principles outlined in the guidelines while developing, reviewing and implementing their national urban policies and urban and territorial planning frameworks; continue to engage with local authorities and other stakeholders in the promotion and further refinement of their urban and territorial planning principles; and, in collaboration with partners, support the future work of UN-Habitat at all levels of government in promoting the use of the guidelines.

17. The Council further requested the Executive Director to develop partnerships with other United Nations bodies, regional commissions, development banks, local authorities and their associations and all other Habitat Agenda partners, to support the adaptation to and use of the guidelines in local, national and regional circumstances, including through capacity and tool development.

III. Outcome of the governance review process

18. On the basis of the work of the UN-Habitat Committee of Permanent Representatives, facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Nigeria and the United States of America, the Governing Council adopted resolution 25/7 entitled "United Nations Human Settlements Programme governance reform".

19. By its resolution 25/7, the Council decided to strengthen the oversight role of the Governing Council and the Committee of Permanent Representatives by requesting the Committee to establish a working group on the programme and budget, consisting of three representatives from each regional group, to increase oversight of the United Nations Human Settlements programme during intersessional periods. The working group will meet at least twice a year and will report to the Committee at its regular meetings. It will also report biennially to the Governing Council, through the Committee. Resolution 25/7 details the functions of the working group and the reports that the secretariat is required to provide.

IV. Update on financial developments

20. Projections for core income for the biennium 2014-2015 stand at $62.5 million for non-earmarked income and $283 million for earmarked income. As at 31 May 2015, non-earmarked income received and confirmed pledges amounted to $50 million (or 80 per cent of the projection), while $240.2 million (or 85 per cent of the projection) had been received in earmarked income.

21. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to implement a strengthened resource mobilization strategy aimed at widening its donor base to include emerging economy countries and to expand its earmarked project portfolio, including through regional resource mobilization action plans. UN-Habitat was also part of the United Nations-wide risk treatment working group focusing on enhancing income from voluntary extrabudgetary contributions.

22. Streamlining of full cost recovery continued, in line with the principles outlined by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/226 to enable more accurate attribution of costs to projects, resulting in more accurate attribution of $2.8 million to earmarked projects in 2014, compared to $1.8 million in 2013, thus reducing subsidization of earmarked projects by core funds. Cost recovery procedures are now being streamlined into the Umoja enterprise resource planning system to ensure that cost recovery is incorporated into the cost plans of every project.

23. As a result of the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), the UN-Habitat financial statements from 2014 are IPSAS-compliant. A review by the external Board of Auditors of the first IPSAS-compliant financial statement is under way. Organization-wide compliance is supported by the deployment of Umoja and an update of standard operating procedures, which is in progress.

24. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to control core expenditure through a wide range of measures, including maintaining low levels of travel costs, limitation of new recruitment of core funded positions to critical positions, closer alignment of expenditure with forecast income and more flexible allocation of staff. As in 2014, a voluntary early retirement package was offered during the first quarter of 2015 in order to achieve a better balance of staff at the different professional grades and to align core staffing levels with core financial resources and priority strategic needs.

25. The above-mentioned measures and the wider organizational reforms undertaken by UN-Habitat succeeded in reducing the core deficit from $5.2 million in 2013 to $1.2 million in 2014. It is expected that the continuing measures will further reduce the core deficit in 2015.

V. Sustainable urbanization and the post-2015 United Nations development agenda

26. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 69/226, UN-Habitat continued to provide information to Governments, United Nations system organizations and other stakeholders on the role of urbanization in sustainable development, with a view to supporting discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

27. Since 2012, UN-Habitat has participated in the work of the United Nations System Task Team on the post-2015 development agenda and its working group on indicators. It also took part in the United Nations system technical support team for the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Habitat has also actively responded to technical requests from the Statistics Division in support of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

28. Throughout the reporting period, UN-Habitat has also worked directly with member States at the country level to explain the importance of sustainable urbanization in national development in the context of discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. Moreover, it has been supporting the activities of the thematic group on sustainable cities of the United

Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III and the Communitas Coalition for sustainable cities and regions in the new United Nations urban agenda.

29. In July 2014, after more than a year of discussion and negotiation, the Open Working Group adopted a proposal for sustainable development goals and targets. It recommended 17 goals and 169 targets. Proposed sustainable development goal 11, "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", includes seven outcome targets and three targets related to the means of implementation.

30. UN-Habitat is actively participating in the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. In that regard, in keeping with the spirit of the data revolution, UN-Habitat proposes to use geospatial data for indicators on land use efficiency and access to public space.

31. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat contributed technical advice with respect to the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, held from 13 to 16 July 2015 in Addis Ababa. UN-Habitat put forward a series of concrete ideas for strengthening the draft outcome document, highlighting the need for sound municipal finance systems and urbanization as a source of endogenous development.

32. As regards the dialogue on the special theme of the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council, the Advisory Group on Gender Issues and the World Urban Campaign both included an agenda item on the role of sustainable urbanization in the post-2015 development agenda in their deliberations close to the time of the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council.

VI. Significant programme activities

A. Mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment

33. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 69/226, during the reporting period UN-Habitat achieved a number of actions in knowledge management, development of tools, capacity-building and advocacy. In terms of knowledge and tools, the second generation "gender issue guides" were completed and distributed electronically in May 2015. They provide guidance on the identification of gender equality issues in the work of all seven UN-Habitat subprogrammes and suggest ways of mitigating inequalities.

34. UN-Habitat also developed a "gender equality marker" tool in May 2015, following six month of consultations among stakeholders. Accompanying it is a user guide, which provides detailed explanations as to how to use the marker. The marker has been piloted in UN-Habitat branches and has been well received.

35. With respect to capacity-building, UN-Habitat has developed an induction module for new staff on gender issues, alongside similar modules for the other cross-cutting issues (i.e. youth, human rights and climate change) in order to strengthen the mainstreaming of gender and women's empowerment in all its work. The module will be one of the mandatory courses for all new employees.

36. In the area of advocacy, UN-Habitat organized and participated in a number of high-level international events. In March 2015, at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, it organized two side events on the themes of "Habitat III, Beijing+20 and the city we need" and "Public space: opportunities and challenges for empowering women and public space". During the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council in April 2015, a gender forum entitled "Engendering sustainable cities" was also organized.

B. United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination High-Level Committee on Programmes working group on a new United Nations urban agenda

37. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to chair the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) High-Level Committee on Programmes working group on a new United Nations urban agenda, which was established in early July 2014. The working group consists of 24 core United Nations system organizations.

38. The working group prepared a draft paper entitled "Urbanization and sustainable development: a United Nations system's input into a new urban agenda". The main objectives of the paper are: (a) to develop a coherent United Nations system input into the Habitat III preparatory process, in particular into the outcome document of the conference, which is to be entitled "The New Urban Agenda"; (b) to ensure policy coherence and cooperation in the implementation of the sustainable cities and human settlements dimension of the post-2015 development agenda and of the outcome of Habitat III; (c) to provide a framework for United Nations system organizations to showcase their work on urban issues.

39. The paper addresses the challenges facing today's urbanization patterns and the opportunities that urbanization offers for sustainable development.

40. The working group has also proposed that CEB issue a joint statement on urbanization and sustainable development at Habitat III. That proposal was accepted by the High-level Committee on Programmes at its twenty-ninth session, held in March 2015, and was also approved by CEB in April 2015. The working group is further developing a proposal on issue-based partnerships for the New Urban Agenda.

C. World Habitat Day 2014

41. World Habitat Day 2014 was observed worldwide on 6 October. Its theme, "Voices from slums", was meant to give a voice to people who live in slums or other vulnerable urban contexts. The purpose of World Habitat Day is to reflect on the state of urban and other human settlements and on the basic right to adequate shelter.

42. Through real stories, participants in World Habitat Day 2014 stressed issues of slum life and demonstrated that slum upgrading programmes can achieve better living conditions for slum dwellers. The theme was also meant to recall the promise of the Millennium Development Goals, whereby world leaders pledged to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020.

43. A wide range of events, exhibitions and activities were organized in over 25 countries around the world. Celebrations took place in Africa (Benin, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, the Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), Asia and the Pacific (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and Viet Nam), South America (Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico), Spain and the United States.

44. An outreach campaign was also organized by UN-Habitat to record messages from slum dwellers and their communities. Through the events, national and local governments and civil society organizations shared experiences on slum upgrading and adequate housing, contributing to policy dialogue.

45. In 2014, World Habitat Day was conceived for the first time as the beginning of a full month, entitled "Urban October", of celebrations on urban and human settlements issues around the world and planned to end with World Cities Day on 31 October.

D. World Cities Day 2014

46. By its resolution 68/239, the General Assembly designated 31 October as World Cities Day, beginning in 2014. It invited Member States, the United Nations system, in particular UN-Habitat, relevant international organizations, civil society and all other relevant stakeholders to observe and raise awareness of the Day. World Cities Day is expected to promote the interest of the international community in global urbanization, push forward cooperation among countries in meeting the opportunities and challenges of urbanization and contribute to sustainable urban development around the world.

47. While the general theme of World Cities Day is "Better city, better life", the special theme for the inaugural celebration of 2014 was "Leading urban transformations". That theme was set to focus on the importance of redefining the urban paradigm for future generations and empowering people to contribute to creative solutions towards a better urban future. It was intended to pay particular attention to innovations and new ideas.

48. The first global celebration was hosted in Shanghai Expo Park by the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, in collaboration with the Chinese Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and UN-Habitat, with participants from 35 countries. Six parallel conferences on public diplomacy, new-type urbanization, infrastructure development, strategic planning, urban transformation and urban health were held and key messages highlighted, including the power of cities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening resilience, ensuring basic services and designing safe streets and other public spaces for all to share. Those events also stressed the power of urban transformation and its importance in the post-2015 development agenda to ensure a sustainable and human-centred approach to development.

E. World Urban Campaign

49. In 2014, more than 155 partners and members of the World Urban Campaign continued to engage in a consensus-building process towards Habitat III, through a global dialogue based around "The city we need", a global manifesto initiated in 2013 and launched in New York in March 2014. From 15 to 18 October 2014, Campaign partners gathered in Caserta, Italy, in an "urban thinkers campus" to advance further in the global dialogue engaging non-governmental constituencies in preparation for Habitat III. They identified the key issues to be addressed and agreed on the core principles of "The city we need".

50. Building on the success of the first urban thinkers campus, the World Urban Campaign partners have committed to host 28 campuses before February 2016 in order to further dialogue and develop "The city we need" for Habitat III. They have also established a deliberative mechanism for non-governmental partners, the "general assembly of partners", with a constitution which they endorsed on 13 April, one day prior to the second session of the Habitat III Preparatory Committee. They have also agreed on a road map, through which 14 constituent groups will meet and deliberate on "The city we need" in order to contribute jointly to the Habitat III process.

VII. First session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

51. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/216 of 21 December 2012, the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III held its first session on 17 and 18 September 2014 at United Nations Headquarters in New York with plenary meetings and two working group meetings. The first session was opened by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Joan Clos, as temporary Chair, on 17 September 2014, followed by the election of two Co-Chairs.

52. Following opening statements made by the Co-Chairs of the Committee and the Secretary-General of the Conference and a statement made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the agenda and programme of work were adopted. Progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the identification of new and emerging challenges on sustainable urban development were also discussed and presented.

53. The Preparatory Committee agreed that the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and the supplementary arrangements established for the Commission on Sustainable Development by the Council applied to the meetings of the Preparatory Committee. A total of 29 statements were made, by member States, stakeholders and representatives of the United Nations system.

54. Decisions were adopted by the Preparatory Committee on the outcome of the considerations of the Working Group on Operational and Administrative Matters. On arrangements for future sessions of the Preparatory Committee, it was recommended that the second session of the Preparatory Committee be held from

14 to 16 April 2015 to discuss further the draft provisional rules of procedure of Habitat III; arrangements for the accreditation and participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the preparatory process and in Habitat III; and a consolidated list of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and major groups recommended for special accreditation to Habitat III.

55. During and before the first session, a series of open consultations, parallel events and side events took place. A total of 10 open consultation meetings for organizations and major groups, including local authorities and other stakeholders, were organized from 10 to 15 September 2014, prior to the intergovernmental sessions. In addition, six parallel events and 12 side events were held from 12 to 16 September 2014. More than 400 stakeholders attended the first session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III.

VIII. Second session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

56. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 67/216 of 21 December 2012 and 69/226 of 19 December 2014, the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III held its second session from 14 to 16 April 2015 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The second session of the Preparatory Committee was attended by representatives of 97 States Members of the United Nations, members of specialized agencies and of the International Atomic Energy Agency and representatives of intergovernmental and United Nations system organizations, NGOs and other major groups. In total, more than 800 participants met in Nairobi for the second session of the Preparatory Committee.

57. The Committee held six plenary meetings and four meetings of its working group. Opening statements were made by the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee, the Secretary-General of Habitat III and the Cabinet Secretary for Land, Housing and Urban Development of Kenya.

58. The Vice-Chair and officers of the Preparatory Committee were elected for the second session, followed by discussions over the course of four working groups on operational and administrative matters, such as the provisional rules of procedure of the Conference; preparations for the Conference; arrangements for the accreditation and participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the preparatory process and in Habitat III; and arrangements for the third session of the Preparatory Committee.

59. The Preparatory Committee approved 33 NGOs and other major groups recommended by the secretariat for special accreditation to the preparatory process and Habitat III. A draft decision submitted by Ecuador and Indonesia on the dates and venue of the third session of the Preparatory Committee and the dates of the Conference was adopted.

60. Two high-level events took place in parallel with the second session of the Preparatory Committee. The general assembly of partners, a broad-based deliberative platform for non-governmental partners, was organized on 13 April 2015 to develop a consensus for a joint outcome document and to deliberate on the constitution, road map and first joint statement for Habitat III.

61. A total of 36 side events also took place on 14, 15 and 16 April 2015 to provide a platform for Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, community representatives, international and national organizations, academia, international and regional finance institutions and other United Nations entities to debate, showcase or present their views on sustainable urban development, as well as specific projects. In addition, 22 exhibitors were invited to exhibit their projects, innovations and solutions for sustainable urban development.

62. The Preparatory Committee invited the General Assembly at its seventieth session to discuss the most appropriate way, including the possibility of convening an extraordinary session of the Preparatory Committee, to advance negotiations on the outstanding issues in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

IX. Global, regional and national preparatory activities

A. National process

63. All Member States have been invited to prepare national reports as part of their contribution to the Habitat III process. The reports are the first step towards an evidence-based outcome document of the Conference. They can be relevant reports on the monitoring of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, or on identifying emerging issues for the elaboration of the New Urban Agenda.

64. The General Assembly in its resolution 69/226 called upon Member States to ensure effective participation in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself of local governments and all other stakeholders, including those in the national Habitat committees, as appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 10 of resolution 68/239, and, inter alia, to expedite the preparation of national reports for Habitat III.

65. To date, more than 100 countries have started the preparation of, or already submitted, their national reports. The Secretary-General of the Conference has offered specific support for the least developed countries for finalizing their national reports.

66. As part of strengthening the mechanisms for effective and inclusive participation by all stakeholders, the national urban forums have been recognized as one of the national-level engagement activities and as platforms for relevant multi-stakeholders to mobilize national support and feed into the New Urban Agenda as part of the preparatory process for Habitat III. Since the first session of the Preparatory Committee, a total of 12 national urban forums have been globally organized or planned to take place, for the creation of a space for discussion and dialogue related to contributions to the New Urban Agenda at the national level. Guidelines for the preparation of national urban forums in the framework of the Habitat III preparatory process have been elaborated.

67. Most of the national urban forums are accompanied by national urban campaigns created to raise awareness of sustainable urbanization among stakeholders and citizens.

B. Regional process

68. In order to feed the intergovernmental discussions and deliberations substantively, broaden the participation and capture all relevant knowledge and views about Habitat III, the process needs to be complemented not only at the national level but at the regional level as well. The regional process has involved the preparation of regional reports for Habitat III and regional meetings.

69. The Habitat III secretariat has been coordinating with the five regional economic and social commissions and the UN-Habitat regional offices to prepare five regional reports for Habitat III, which will build on the national reports received from the Member States of the United Nations.

70. A call for expressions of interest for hosting a Habitat III thematic and regional meeting was published in January 2015 and there will be four official regional high-level meetings, to be held in the Czech Republic, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria, covering all regions. The regional meetings are expected to have a wide range of participants, to discuss priorities for the New Urban Agenda and to issue recommendations in the form of a final declaration by the participants. The final declarations from regional meetings will be considered official inputs to the Habitat III process and will be published on the Habitat III web page.

71. The regional preparations are benefitting from regional ministerial conferences on housing and urban development and other relevant expert group meetings, such as the meeting of the high-level panel on urbanization and structural transformation in Africa, held in March 2015; the fifth Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development held in Seoul from 3 to 5 November 2014 on the theme of "Equal opportunity for sustainable development"; the twenty-third general assembly of the Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City in August 2014; and the seventy-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Housing and Land Management, held in Geneva in October 2014.

C. Global process

72. At the global level, a report will be prepared, drawing on the national and regional reports. It will include all available knowledge, resources and data, as input to and support for the preparatory process of the Conference.

73. Substantive inputs will also come from the thematic meetings, which will be hosted by cities around the world and form part of the official process. After the call for proposals made in January and February 2015, cities such as Montreal (Canada), Mexico City, Cuenca (Ecuador), Barcelona (Spain), Tel Aviv (Israel), Abu Dhabi and Johannesburg (South Africa) will organize thematic meetings as part of the preparatory process for Habitat III.

74. The preparatory process for Habitat III will also mobilize multidisciplinary expertise on sustainable urban development with the creation of 10 policy units. Two hundred experts will be selected from nominations received by Member States and stakeholders, ensuring geographical and gender balance. The policy units will be created to:

(a) Bring together high-level expertise to explore state-of-the-art research and analysis;

(b) Identify good practices and lessons learned;

(c) Develop independent policy recommendations on particular issues relating to sustainable urban development.

75. The main tasks of the policy units will be to:

(a) Identify the challenges, including the structural and policy constraints, for the New Urban Agenda, within the issues discussed by each policy unit;

(b) Identify the policy priorities and critical issues for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda within the issues discussed by each policy unit;

(c) Develop action-oriented recommendations for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

76. The Habitat III policy units will each be composed of 20 experts, bringing together individuals from a variety of fields, including academia, government, civil society and other regional and international bodies.

77. At its second session, the Preparatory Committee decided in its resolution 1/2015 to call upon participating States to support the work of the policy units, including by nominating suitably qualified technical experts to compose them, with a view to facilitating the elaboration of policy recommendations, which might contribute, together with the inputs from broad regional and thematic consultations among all stakeholders, to the work to be undertaken by the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee in preparing the draft outcome document of the Conference.

78. The Secretary-General of the Conference, in close consultation with the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, was requested to keep a balance between Government-nominated technical experts and others in selecting technical experts to compose each policy unit and to be guided by the need for equitable geographical representation and gender balance.

79. The policy units will present their final outputs no later than December 2015 and participating States and all accredited stakeholders will be invited to send written comments, which will be published on the website of the Conference.

X. Mobilization of local governments, other relevant stakeholders and the United Nations system

80. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/216, Habitat III and its Preparatory Committee have been open to all States Members of the United Nations and have invited them to facilitate participatory processes and wide stakeholder participation, including local governments, particularly when developing, revising and implementing national urban policies, where appropriate, as a means for preparing Habitat III. The Bureau of the Preparatory Committee has been established, representing all States Members of the United Nations, for coordination of the preparatory process for Habitat III and is composed of representatives of 10 Member States, covering all five major regions.

81. The General Assembly decided in its resolution 69/226 that all major groups and the NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, as well as those accredited to Habitat II and the summit to be held in September 2015 for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, should register in order to participate in the Conference. It also decided that NGOs not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council wishing to attend and contribute to the Conference, and whose work was relevant to the subject of the Conference, might participate as observers in the Conference and in the preparatory meetings, in accordance with the provisions contained in part VII of Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996, and subject to the approval of the Preparatory Committee in plenary meeting, and that, while respecting fully the provisions contained in rule 57 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, such a decision should be made by consensus.

82. The first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee have benefited from a very high level of participation by all relevant stakeholders and partners, including local authorities, engaging them in effective contributions to, and participation in, the Habitat III process. Given the fact that Habitat III offers a unique opportunity to discuss emerging challenges and ways forward for cities, towns and villages at all levels, the importance has been emphasized of a wide range of participation in the process to promote sustainable urbanization and human settlements and their implementation.

83. The Habitat III general assembly of partners convened their inaugural meeting on 13 April 2015 in Nairobi and approved a statement to be recognized as a significant mechanism for stakeholder involvement in the preparatory process for the Conference and in particular for the New Urban Agenda. The President of the general assembly of partners, Eugenie L. Birch, and the Vice-President, Shipra Narang Suri, were elected in a first step for the stakeholder platform.

84. The Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III represented the voices of local and regional government organizations at the second session of the Preparatory Committee. Over 70 delegates from local and regional governments around the world, including the mayors of Istanbul (Turkey), Quito, Berlin, Victoria, Almere (Netherlands), Morogoro (United Republic of Tanzania) and Emalahleni (South Afria), came together in Nairobi to participate in a number of different sessions and side events. Preparations for the second World Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities, to be held in Quito, prior to Habitat III, were shared with the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee by the Global Taskforce during the second session of the Preparatory Committee.

85. As part of inter-agency collaboration on preparations for Habitat III, a United Nations task team on Habitat III has been established to mobilize the United Nations system as a whole in the work of the preparatory process for the conference. It is composed of representatives of 25 United Nations agencies and programmes. One of the successful inter-agency exercises for Habitat III has been the elaboration of issue papers. The Habitat III secretariat collaborated with the task team to prepare a series of 22 issue papers that are stocktaking documents, highlighting and addressing significant urban issues and general findings by identifying research needs on housing and sustainable urban development. All 22 papers were finalized at the writeshop held in New York from 26 to 29 May 2015, and have been

published on the website of the conference (www.habitat3.org). Member States and stakeholders have been invited to send written comments on the issue papers.

XI. Advocacy and communications

86. Effective and efficient advocacy, outreach and communications of the preparatory activities for Habitat III at the national, regional and global levels have been achieved through social media, the conference website and periodic newsletters, among other means. Through the website, information, knowledge products and official and non-official documents have been actively disseminated and a Habitat III newsletter has been sent out monthly since March 2015.

87. In order to streamline information and knowledge-sharing, the Habitat III secretariat is launching a new online platform "Urban dialogues" from July 2015, which provides all those interested with a space where they can stay informed about and be engaged in the preparatory process for the New Urban Agenda in a transparent manner. That further builds an inclusive, diverse and consultative platform by bringing all Member States, partners and key stakeholders together to share and exchange knowledge, information and discussions.

88. In addition, the preparatory process for Habitat III should encourage inputs from a variety of perspectives and groups to ensure an inclusive and focused discussion on sustainable urban development. The role of media and communications professionals is crucial to expanding the level of consciousness of the wider audience. Such professionals have the opportunity to spread knowledge and share reflections on urban issues. Habitat III has promoted the Urban Journalism Academy, a pioneering initiative to train journalists and media professionals who are already interested or involved in urban development, with reference to the social, economic and economic issues facing cities in the twenty-first century. To date the Urban Journalism Academy has been conducted in Barcelona (Spain), Montreal (Canada), Nairobi and Brussels.

89. Monthly informal briefings in New York to all Member States have been established since May 2015, in order to create an efficient technical channel of information during the preparatory process for Habitat III.

XII. Next steps of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

90. In its resolution 66/207 and in line with the bi-decennial cycle (1976, 1996 and 2016), the General Assembly decided to convene a third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III). The Conference will take place in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016 and the third session of the Preparatory Committee will take place in Jakarta from 25 to 27 July 2016. In order to facilitate the operations and implementation of the conference, the Habitat III secretariat has established an operations team based in Quito.

91. Initial assessments have taken place, building partnerships with the Government of Ecuador and the municipality of Quito, and a feasibility study carried out. Several missions have been undertaken by members of the secretariat and the Secretary-General of the Conference for high-level negotiations on the host

country agreement. Negotiations with Indonesia for the third session of the Preparatory Committee are also progressing positively.

92. A United Nations interdepartmental task team has been created by the secretariat to ensure proper coordination among all United Nations operations team that will be involved in the conference.

XIII. Financial resources

93. A trust fund for Habitat III has been established and the secretariat has been able to mobilize over $2.8 million of extrabudgetary financial contributions from certain Member States, namely France, Germany, Indonesia and Spain, and from the United Nations system with the support of agencies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme. The secretariat continues its efforts to mobilize financial resources and encourages Member States and other organizations to make voluntary contributions to Habitat III.

94. The secretariat has also adopted an innovative approach to mobilizing funds through contributions from host countries that have shown an interest in organizing regional and thematic meetings. Those countries will contribute between $500,000 and $1 million to the Habitat III Trust Fund to ensure the participation of representatives from the least developed countries in the preparatory process and the efficient and effective organization of those meetings. To date, Tel-Aviv (Israel), Montreal (Canada), Cuenca (Ecuador), Barcelona (Spain), Johannesburg (South Africa), Abuja, Mexico City, Abu Dhabi and Prague have been approved as official venues for thematic and regional meetings. There will be further resource mobilization through the creation of the Habitat III policy units. The secretariat has encouraged Member States and stakeholders not only to propose qualified technical experts, but also to co-lead organizations to compose the policy units with a contribution of $250,000.

XIV. Conclusions and recommendations

95. **With respect to the work on urbanization and human settlements reported above, Member States are called upon to:**

(a) **Give appropriate consideration to sustainable urbanization and human settlements in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals at the national and subnational levels;**

(b) **Initiate or enhance programmes and projects at the national or subnational level to strengthen the capacity of rural service centres and small and intermediate towns to improve access for rural and peri-urban inhabitants to sustainable urban basic services and social and economic services;**

(c) **Consider the principles outlined in the international guidelines on urban and territorial planning approved by the UN-Habitat Governing Council at its twenty-fifth session, while developing, reviewing and implementing their own national urban policies and urban and territorial planning frameworks;**

(d) **Provide financial support to UN-Habitat through increased voluntary contributions and accord priority to contributions to the general**

purpose fund of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, in order to provide predictable multi-year funding.

96. Turning to the third United Nations Conference on housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), throughout the preparations to date, the Habitat III secretariat has been successful in increasing the presence and participation of Member States and key stakeholders in the second session of the Preparatory Committee, finalizing its issue papers in collaboration with the United Nations system and actively engaging at the national and regional levels, such as in national urban forums. In that regard the secretariat has been focusing on its efforts in national and regional preparations and engagement and with the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations.

97. The secretariat has ensured that partnerships have been built and information shared in a timely manner with representatives of Member States and the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee. It has also ensured effective coordination with stakeholders and the United Nations system in order to maximize the possibilities of inter-agency collaboration in the fields of knowledge, engagement and policy.

98. The secretariat continues to play its coordination role in mobilizing all Member States to bring them together for the development of the New Urban Agenda and its successful implementation.

99. Through the establishment of the policy units and the organization of high-level regional and thematic meetings, Habitat III will progress to commitments and actions at the policy level. The policy units will gather high-level expertise to explore state-of-the-art research and analysis, identify good practices and lessons learned, and develop independent policy recommendations on particular issues regarding sustainable urban development. From an international perspective, thematic meetings will be organized based on specific and relevant issues to make thematic recommendations on the most significant urban issues to be addressed in the area of housing and sustainable urban development.

100. In the light of the issues discussed above, Member States are called upon to:

(a) Expedite the elaboration of national reports, including from local authorities, the private sector and NGOs, for the preparatory process for Habitat III and the hosting of national urban forums and national urban campaigns;

(b) Contribute to the official thematic and regional meetings to be hosted from September 2015 to April 2016;

(c) Provide written comments on the Habitat III issue and policy papers, as part of their contribution to the draft zero document, which is to be ready no later than six months before the date of the Conference;

(d) Continue to support the national, regional and global preparations for Habitat III through voluntary contributions to the Habitat III Trust Fund and the participation of representatives of developing countries in the forthcoming session of the Preparatory Committee and in the Conference itself, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 13 (c) of resolution 67/216, and invite voluntary contributions to support the participation of Habitat Agenda partners and other relevant stakeholders in the sessions of the Preparatory Committee.